

INTELOFAX

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Korean Contract Lumbermen in the  
Simonovka Area

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1. In July 1947, Soviet officials visited various villages in North Korea to recruit men for work in lumber camps in the USSR. The Soviets promised a daily wage of from 70 to 80 won and that three meals a day would only cost 5 won. Some of the Koreans who were hired that month were taken to Chongjin, where they stayed in a contract laborers' camp until they left on 18 November. At Chongjin they were given a name card, told to destroy all documents and paper, and given a contract to sign. The provisions of the contract were as follows:
  - a. The company will give 50 kilograms of rice, 2,000 won, a suit of cotton clothes, and one pair of working shoes to the laborer.
  - b. Wages will be paid according to the Soviet law.
  - c. When the laborer is sick, he will be cared for free of charge and his wage will continue to be paid.
  - d. After two years, the period of the contract, the laborer will be returned to Chongjin free of charge.
  - e. The laborer will receive the same amount of food as the Soviet laborers.
2. The ship, carrying 2,500 Korean laborers, arrived at Vladivostok on 20 November. Doctors and nurses came aboard and checked the men. Then a Soviet official took away any paper or food that the Koreans had, and also took away their name cards. Later these name cards were used to call roll in the lumber camp. Vladivostok was partially frozen over, and there were fifty 8,000-ton ships and 20 warships in the port.
3. One hundred and sixteen Koreans were sent by train from Vladivostok (131-54, 43-47) to Simonovka (about 132-00, 44-10) and then to the lumber camp at Zilanza, about 10 miles from Simonovka. The others who were on the ship were divided between Iman (133-45, 15-55) and Khabarovsk (135-06, 48-30). Before 1936 there were many Koreans raising rice near Simonovka, but they were sent to the mountains to cut wood or to fishing stations along the coast.

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4. About 30 percent of the Koreans in the camp at Zilanza were Communists led by KANG Chon-kuk (강준국), assisted by TUN Yong-ara (윤용아). However, they were not real Communists, because members of the North Korean Labor Party, who were the real Communists, had no need to work in the USSR. Actually the group was made up of poor farmers who could not prosper under Communism. Even in the USSR the Koreans found it hard to get along. In spite of the Soviet recruiter's promises, the Koreans were only paid 15 won a day. The meals were always black bread and potato soup. The Koreans were not accustomed to the extremes of heat and cold, and many of them got malaria. For various reasons, only 35 out of the original 116 returned to North Korea from Zilanza.
5. The Koreans and the Soviets did not get along together too well. Often quarrels would arise when the Soviets would attempt to get in the front of the line where Koreans were waiting to buy black bread. In the spring of 1949 on one occasion the militia had to be called from Simonovka to stop a fight which had broken out. The Koreans got a maximum of 500 rubles a month for the same work for which the Soviets received 800 rubles.\*\*
6. Besides the Koreans, there were 50 Soviet lumbermen and 30 other Soviet employees and their families who worked in the railway station and government store.

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7. The lumber camp was headed by a manager, vice manager, and chiefs of the housing, finance, and laboring sections. The work day was eight hours. Those laborers who had three or more absences a week were tried before the People's Court.
8. In Zilanza there was one store selling black bread, which had four clerks and one baker, and one store selling food and clothing. Prices in these government-owned stores were as follows:

bean oil	1 kg	20 rubles
oats	1 kg	3.10 rubles
millet	1 kg	5 rubles
rice	1 kg	15 rubles
black bread	1 kg	3.20 rubles

About 2½ miles from the town was a government-owned farm which raised potatoes and millet. Those who worked on the farm were given 20 pyongs\*\* of their own to work after hours. They sold some of their produce to the Koreans in the lumber camp.

9. The laborers did no traveling except on Sundays, when they went in a group with a Soviet boss to Simonovka. Simonovka was a city of 5,000 people which had a garrison of 200 soldiers. No passes were needed for the lumber factory, and the Koreans were given an identification card which they never had occasion to use. Since no leaves were given, the Koreans did not travel about the country; however, they heard of Monastyrishche (135-44, 44-21), at which one parachute division was stationed. The Koreans were allowed to send letters home after they had been censored by the factory officials. Letters cost 20 rubles for postage and took three months to arrive in North Korea.

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10. In November 1949, 35 Koreans left Milanza by truck for Sahoye (130-31, 42-28) on the Soviet-North Korean border. There they were given back the name cards which had been taken away from them in Vladivostok in 1947. After a thorough baggage inspection, they crossed into North Korea, where they exchanged the name cards for certificates of citizenship.

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[redacted] Comment: The official ruble rate is four to one United States dollar. [redacted] one ruble equalled 1,000 North Korean won, while in previous reports it was stated that in late 1949 the Soviets were exchanging four won for one ruble.

[redacted] Comment: One pyong is equal to 36 square feet.

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